

# Hackney carriage and private hire newsletter October 2020

Welcome to the West Suffolk Council October 2020 hackney carriage and private hire newsletter which provides updates including COVID-19, the new hackney carriage and private hire conditions policy and new application forms.

Please continue to check our webpage for regular updates:  
<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxi>

## New application forms

We are currently updating all our online application forms to ensure they are in line with the new Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle standards which were released on 21 July 2020 and our policy. Please see the below link to the Department for Transport guidance.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904369/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards-english-28-07-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904369/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards-english-28-07-2020.pdf)

Old forms will no longer be accepted and have been removed from the website. They will be replaced with the new forms over the coming weeks. In the interim, you can email [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk) telling us what you need so that we can assist you.

## Submission of applications and payments

All completed applications and supporting documentation must be scanned or photographed and emailed to [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk). Payment can be made by debit or credit card (cash payments are not accepted). To make a payment please call 01284 757400 and quote your licence number.

Applications or payments submitted by post will not be accepted and the Council will not accept liability for the loss of any documentation for applications submitted via post.

In order for an application to be considered the applicant must submit several supporting documents, as detailed in the policy and on the application form. Please ensure you are including copies of the full document where applicable, in particular all pages of the V5C and front and back of the driving licence.

Incomplete application forms, incorrect fees or supporting documentation that do not conform will result in the application being rejected. When you have submitted your application, you will be sent an email within three working days acknowledging if your application is complete and will be processed or if it has been rejected and what additional information is required.

Note, applications can currently take up to eight weeks to process. Please submit any applications well in advance and at least 14 days prior to the licence expiry date.

Applications will be processed in order of when the complete application has been received and not based on expiry date.

Once your application has been processed, you will be contacted with an appointment for you to collect your new licence, vehicle plate or driver's badge and provide your original documents (photocopies will not be accepted). At the appointment, if applicable, you will need to return your expired plate or badge.

## **New driver and vehicle applications**

Please send your completed application form together with supporting documentation via email to [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk) where we will validate and process your application. For new driver applications only, once your completed application is submitted a licensing officer will contact you for an informal interview over the phone. When all checks have been satisfied, an appointment will be made for you to attend at West Suffolk House car park to meet with a licensing officer, here your original documentation will be verified prior to a licence being issued. Please however note the section immediately below.

## **Council offices**

All West Suffolk Council offices are currently closed to the public. Please do not attend the offices. If you need to make contact with the team please email [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk) or call 01284 758050.

The only exception is if you have been contacted with an appointment to collect a vehicle plate or badge. Appointments will take place only at West Suffolk House car park, Bury St Edmunds. Please do not attend any other venues. When arriving, please follow the instructions provided to you and remain in the car park, phoning the licensing team to inform of your arrival. Do not attempt to enter the building.

## **Covid-19 - face covering use by transport workers**

In England, passengers must now wear a face covering when using taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs).

The mandatory requirement for using face coverings does not apply to staff while they are working. The requirement does however apply to staff while they are not working, for example, when traveling to or from work on public transport, or if they enter a shop or supermarket in a transport hub before or after shifts, or whilst on a break.

In any case, face coverings offer some benefits in work situations where social distancing is difficult to manage. For example, when working in passenger facing roles including when providing assistance to disabled passengers.

Public health advice is that staff (including taxi and private hire vehicle drivers) wear a face covering when they are unable to maintain social distancing in passenger facing roles, recognising that there will be exceptional circumstances when a staff

member cannot wear a face covering, or when their task makes it sensible (based on a risk assessment) for them not to wear a face covering.

Taxi and PHV drivers are advised to make an assessment of risk as outlined in the transport operator guidance published on 12 May. The acceptance of a booking request by a PHV operator is a decision made based on the operator's own assessment of risk. Any requirements for face coverings should be made clear to the passenger before the operator accepts the booking. Taxi drivers can use this assessment to determine whether or not it is reasonable to admit a passenger who is not wearing a face covering, considering other mitigations they put in place from their risk assessment. This does not however absolve them of their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

It's important for passengers to be able to identify you as a legitimate driver. Therefore, please be prepared to remove your face covering so passengers can see your identify matches up with your displayed licence badge. This must be done whilst adhering to the current social distancing rules.

## **Taxi ranks**

Licensing have received complaints from Police regarding hackney carriages parking on the roadway and pedestrian areas adjacent to the Bury St Edmunds taxi rank within the Traverse and Cornhill area when the rank is full.

Drivers are reminded that hackney carriages are only allowed to park on the rank itself and they are causing an obstruction to other road users and pedestrians by parking on the road.

West Suffolk parking wardens have been made aware and CCTV will be used to identify and issue parking tickets to offending vehicles or drivers.

## **New hackney carriage and private hire conditions policy**

From 2 October 2020 a new West Suffolk Council hackney carriage and private hire conditions handbook has come into effect. The full policy is available on our website where you should ensure you have reviewed it. Some of the main changes are summarised below however this list is not exhaustive, and the full policy should be referred to for any applications or queries.

[https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Business/Regulation\\_and\\_Licensing/Licensing/Taxi\\_licensing/upload/WSCHackneyCarriageandPrivateHireConditionsPolicyHandbook.pdf](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Business/Regulation_and_Licensing/Licensing/Taxi_licensing/upload/WSCHackneyCarriageandPrivateHireConditionsPolicyHandbook.pdf)

If you have any queries with regards to the new handbook and would like to discuss this with a licensing officer, a virtual drop in session will be held via Microsoft Teams and invitations for this event will be sent via email in due course. Alternatively, email [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk).

## **DBS Update Service**

It is now a licence condition that applicants sign up to the DBS online update service and on the grant of a licence, the licence holder must maintain the subscription. In order to sign up to the online service the applicant, on receipt of their completed Enhanced DBS Certificate, must register for the service within 19 days of the DBS certificate issue date. Upon re-licencing the applicant will need to provide the council with their original certificate in order for the update service to be checked.

## **Registration with GB Group**

To be able to sign in and complete the disclosure application, you first need to register at - <https://gbg.onlinedisclosures.co.uk/Registration/Registration>

To self-register use the following:

- **PIN: 168952**
- **User Word: Drive**

## **Vehicle tests and inspections**

All vehicles must have inspections carried out at least twice a year at an approved vehicle testing station from the list of approved testers supplied by the council, available on our website <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxi>. The first test must be carried out prior to the grant of the Licence (when a Certificate of Compliance will be issued for six months) and the second test must be carried out prior to the expiry of the Certificate of Compliance issued on passing the first test.

## **West Suffolk tests**

From 1 January 2021 drivers applying to renew their licence must undertake a refresher Safeguarding, CSE and Disability Awareness course prior to re-issue of the licence. This is to ensure that applicants and licenced drivers are receiving the most up to date information at the time of the application.

All drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles must also hold a DVSA approved practical disability awareness course (DSA previously).

## **Executive Hire (discreet plates)**

### **Section 75(3) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976**

Applicants wishing to apply for a discreet plate must satisfy the following council requirements:

- a. The vehicle must be in immaculate condition with no visible defects, dents or blemishes to the external bodywork or internal trim.
- b. The type of work undertaken is 'executive' in nature. This would mean that the vehicle is used specifically for clients that for security reasons would not want

the vehicle to be identifiable. Documentary evidence of contracts will be required.

Applications for exemption will be made to the licensing authority in writing by a person holding a private hire operator's licence issued by the council. The application must be accompanied by documentation to evidence compliance with points a and b.

### **Private Hire Operators**

Applications for a private hire vehicle operator licence must be made on the council application form, with the appropriate fee and the applicant must undergo a Basic Disclosure Barring Service check. If the applicant is a limited company a DBS and fit and proper test for directors and secretaries. The council will then decide whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold an operator licence.

The council will grant operator licences for a period of five years. A licence will only be granted for less than five years in exceptional circumstances. A basic DBS will need to be undertaken annually and the operator's licence will be suspended if this not done. If the operator is a driver, they will be checked six monthly as part of their drivers licence and annually thereafter for the duration of the operator's licence should they cease to be a driver.

### **Next drivers forum**

The minutes from the Drivers forum held in July will soon be available on the website and the date of the next drivers' forum will be 29 October 2020. Attendance at the forum is for the agreed nominated drivers only as per the minutes. Please contact them to raise any queries or issues.

### **Licensing team contact details**

Phone: 01284 758050

Email: [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxi>